

Balancing your Home and Work when Working Remote

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As the novelty of working from home has worn off during the pandemic, we continue to assess how the changes in our work environment impact our professional and personal lives.

Recently, great focus has been placed on improving work satisfaction and productivity through actions such as: defining your workspace, establishing clear working hours and ensuring positive communication. However, less support has been provided on how to manage the new expectations that can arise within your household when you are spending significantly more time at home. If you or one of your housemates (partner, roommate, child, etc.) are continuing to work from home, here are some possible conflicts areas that you may need to address to help your home function more smoothly.



Don't rely on mind-reading

Don't assume your housemates know what's on your mind. Just because you may be spending more time at home, doesn't mean everyone is aligned about what tasks need to be done around the house. If you are worrying about something, such as an important household task that needs to be done, it doesn't mean that they are worrying about the same things. We all have different mental loads and cope with them in our own unique ways¹. Make time to identify and discuss the differences between everyone's priorities to better understand how you each perceive the needs of the household. This will help you find opportunities to manage the needs and tasks of your household more effectively.

Working from home doesn't mean not working

While there is time saved throughout the day by working from home, such as reduced commute to the office, individuals who work from home often work more hours and are more focused on their work compared to when they are in the office². To avoid unwanted interruptions and to keep a good balance of appropriate communications, try simple guidelines about respecting each other's spaces. For example, shutting the door, creating a conference call sign or setting do not disturb hours. Also, consider setting up alternate means for everyone to communicate and coordinate. Communicating doesn't mean having a sit-down conversation every time something needs to get done, but rather creating opportunities for household tasks to be completed without regular verbal reminders.

For example, some households will have a magnet on their dishwasher for the status of the dishes (clean or dirty). This ensures that all household members know if they should add dishes to the dishwasher or if it's time for the dishwasher to be emptied. Other ideas include using a dry erase board for task assignment, calendar of activities and reminder messages. Simple ideas such as these can help everyone know what's going on, or who does them, and can streamline overall communications. The goal is to make it easy on everyone's mental load and remove worry from their shoulders.

Respect each other's space

Whenever possible, if you or others are working from home, you should maintain a dedicated workplace that is separate from the common spaces of your home. This allows you to stay out of each other's space if you are working when others are home. It can be helpful to think of your workspace as if you had an individual office at home. Having a dedicated space helps you keep organized and keep your work and home "lives" separate. In the same way that you set boundaries with your coworkers in the office, such as when you are available, you should have the same conversation with your housemates.

We Can Help

If you are looking for more resources to support you and your household, [VITAL WorkLife](#) is here to help. For more information on what your ideal working environment may be, [take this quiz](#) and [click here](#) for our previous insight on remote working best practices. Whatever stressors may be impacting you at home or work contact us at **800.383.1908** or through your **VITAL WorkLife App**.

Sources:

1. <https://www.healthline.com/health/relationships/mental-load>
2. <https://www.apollotechnical.com/working-from-home-productivity-statistics/>